



St John XXIII Primary School

Grievance & Complaints Procedure

Preamble

St. John XXIII is committed to providing students with an education of the highest possible quality. However, from time to time, students, parents or teachers may raise concerns, complaints or grievances about matters or issues relating to their experiences at the school. This procedure deals specifically with complaints raised by students or parents.

This document sets out the internal procedures that apply within the school for addressing student or parent complaints and grievances. These procedures are designed to ensure that throughout the school there is a transparent process for ensuring student complaints and grievances are dealt with fairly, consistently and promptly.

Dealing with Complaints – Initial Concerns

Everyone needs to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

The following key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended school provision, will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

Dealing with Complaints – Formal Procedures

Formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

The school has nominated roles, this begins with the Classroom Teacher and moving to the Principal.

General Principles

The complaints procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation where necessary;
- respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- treat all complaints with sensitivity;
- ensure that no person is victimised as a result of raising a complaint.

Making a Complaint

If as a parent or student you wish to make a complaint the following procedure should be adhered to:

1. Write an appropriate note or email to the relevant person (e.g. classroom teacher) outlining your concern
2. Make an appointment to speak on the phone with the relevant person(s)
3. Consider speaking with the school's Wellbeing Leader (if appropriate)
4. Arrange meeting times or phone calls through the school office
5. Ensure that the relevant person(s) is given a reasonable amount of time to take the steps required to resolve or address concerns

Contacting the Principal

- If the issue remains unresolved after discussion with the relevant person(s) at the school, discuss the concern with the principal
- Request an appointment with the principal or assistant principal through the school office
- Note that the principal may ask another senior staff member to represent him/her. Also, if the relevant staff member is going to be present at the meeting, the meeting time is more likely to occur outside classroom hours
- In some rare cases it may not be possible to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant using these procedures. In such a case complainants should discuss the options for further action with the Principal. This may include the involvement of external dispute resolution consultants.

Resolving Complaints

There are both formal and informal options for the resolution of a grievance or complaint. Use of informal options is recommended in the first instance as it may prevent the escalation of a minor dispute to a more serious complaint.

Informal options

The following informal options could be considered:

Self-resolution- The parties themselves may resolve concerns in open discussion with the provision of relevant information or the clarification of issues

Supported self-resolution- The parties may be assisted to resolve a possible misunderstanding, miscommunication or lack of clarity about the issue in question by a support person such as a colleague, supervisor, principal, leader or counsellor providing professional advice or support.

Facilitated mediation- The parties may be assisted by a facilitator who is trained in mediation to identify issues, explore options and consider alternatives to find a resolution. The facilitator may be an external mediator, a senior colleague, a principal, a school leader or a counsellor.

Formal Options

In circumstances where no mutually acceptable resolution of the matter is reached through informal resolution, or in cases where the matter is considered to be serious, formal procedures can include:

Intervention- the principal may meet with the party, or parties separately or jointly. If this does not resolve the issue then the principal makes a decision and notifies the parties of that decision.

Investigation- A complaint about a person concerning an alleged serious breach of legislation, school policy or procedure (e.g. student bullying, student drug and alcohol issues) may require an investigation

Investigating Complaints

It is suggested that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

1. Clarify the issue by clarifying the nature of the complaint
2. Determine the seriousness of the complaint (Is it of a nature that requires immediate attention)
3. Choose an option for the resolution of the complaint.

Less serious complaints	Serious complaints
<p>Minor grievances and complaints should be resolved promptly using informal options, so that complaints are resolved closest to the source of the issue.</p> <p>Determine the most appropriate informal option for resolution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-resolution • supported self-resolution • facilitated mediation. 	<p>Grievances and complaints deemed to be serious should be resolved as soon as possible using formal options. These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervention • Investigation

4. Meet with the complainant or contact them
5. Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish. (Gather facts)
6. Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
7. Keep notes of the interview.
8. Keep the Principal informed of the progress

At each stage in the procedure it is important to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

1. an explanation;
2. an apology;

An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues. Based on the issue, the designated person shall take immediate and appropriate corrective action. If there appears to be no foundation to the allegation other than the complaint:

no record shall be made of the allegation in either the complainer or the complainant's personnel records.

if a foundation for the allegation exists, appropriate action will follow.

every effort shall be made to provide appropriate support for the complainant.

Complaints will be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. To be effective, staff members will need to set realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant given details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Difficult Matters

If a matter cannot be resolved at the school level through formal or informal options, or if the complaint is about the principal of the school, the complainant may be referred to the relevant Catholic Education Office or Regional Office or the Parish Priest for the complaint to be dealt with in accordance with their complaints policy. A complaint can be lodged by emailing via www.cem.edu.au 'Contact Us'.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Complaint Form (please fill out and send to the Principal)

1. Your details		
Family Name:	Given Names:	
Address:		
Contact Number:	Email	
2. You are: (Please tick one)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/caregiver	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
3. Subject of complaint		
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff member	<input type="checkbox"/> Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)		
4. Details of the Complaint		
Please attach additional pages if required if there is insufficient space		
5. Have you previously raised this concern with a staff member? (please tick)		
<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (if yes, when)	
Who dealt with the matter?		
What was the result?		
Signature:	Date:	

School Office Use: RECORDING OF OUTCOMES

For matters which have been resolved:

Resolution Options

Self-resolution

Supported self-resolution

Facilitated Mediation

Intervention

Investigation

Actions undertaken:

Outcome

Date matter finalised

Name of staff member

Signature:

Referred to: Name

Date:

Referred by: Name

Signature

Outcome

Name of staff member:

Signature